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ABSTRACT

This Eleventh Annual Report on activities of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse begins with the goal, objectives, and scope and methodology of the Clearinghouse followed by a summary of the challenges against library materials that were reported and took place between July 1, 1997 and June 30, 1998. Details about each challenge reported by public libraries and school library media centers during the year are then presented alphabetically by title. A statistical snapshot of challenges reported to the Clearinghouse data since its inception in May 1987 is given, followed by a five-year overview of challenges to library materials in Oregon, based on data reported since July 1, 1993. Four charts analyze the data in this section. Other issues in intellectual freedom in Oregon in 1997-98 are then highlighted. (AEF)

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Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse: Eleventh Annual Report. July 1, 1997-June 30, 1998

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Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

Eleventh Annual Report

July 1, 1997– June 30, 1998

Goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

The goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse is to uphold the principles of the Library Bill of Rights in all types of libraries, by improving communication between librarians, board members, professional associations, and other concerned groups in Oregon about challenges to intellectual freedom, and by increasing awareness as to how threats to intellectual freedom can be overcome.

Objectives of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

- To establish a central clearinghouse to collect and disseminate reports about challenges to intellectual freedom in all types of Oregon libraries.
- To provide information about challenged materials to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians, and academic librarians when requests for reconsideration of materials are formally registered.
- To provide information to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians, and academic librarians about establishing appropriate policies and procedures before a challenge to intellectual freedom occurs.
- To cooperate with other persons and groups concerned with intellectual freedom or related issues.

Scope and Methodology of the Clearinghouse

The data collected is limited to formal challenges to any type of library material in any type of Oregon library. A formal challenge is defined here as a written "Request for Reconsideration" or "Statement of Concern" submitted by a group or individual to a library. The Clearinghouse will report informal (not written) challenges when such challenges are of interest because they have received significant public debate.

The Clearinghouse reports details about challenges as they are recorded on "Reconsideration Report" forms submitted by library or school staff, or occasionally by citizens. Additional information is obtained from newspaper reports, if available. In a few instances, newspaper articles are the sole source of information about a challenge.

The Eleventh Annual Report summarizes 16 challenges against library materials that took place between July 1, 1997 and June 30, 1998. The section, "Other Issues in Intellectual Freedom in Oregon in 1997-98," provides a brief synopsis of other issues concerning intellectual freedom that affect Oregon libraries. A five-year overview of Clearinghouse data (see section, "The Charts") analyzes the data in a graphic format. "The Big Picture," provides a statistical snapshot of Clearinghouse data since its inception in May 1987.

It is possible to research challenges in Oregon libraries using either the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse Index to Challenges at the Oregon State Library Website <http://www.osl.state.or.us/libdev/libdev.html> or the printed Annual Reports produced by the Clearinghouse. The Index to Challenges on the Website or the printed Index to Challenges included in the 9th Annual Report will locate titles and the number of the Annual Report that includes the challenge.

The Annual Reports themselves will yield more complete information, including a summary of objections. The Website index is the source of the most current information in that challenges are added on a monthly basis. Beginning with the 9th Annual Report, 1995-96, the reports are posted on the Oregon State Library Website <http://www.osl.state.or.us/libdev/libdev.html> To obtain copies of Annual Reports prior to 1995-96, or in the print version, contact Val Vogt, Oregon State Library, at 503-378-2112, extension 222, or <val.t.vogt@state.or.us>

Summary of Challenges Reported in 1997-98

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse received information about 16 challenges to library materials between July 1, 1997 and June 30, 1998. 14 of the challenged titles were books, one was an audio tape and one was a magazine. Public libraries experienced 13 of the challenges and school libraries experienced 3 challenges. Eleven of the challenged items were designated as children's or young adult materials, and five were materials for adults. In all of the challenges, library staff, committees, library boards, site councils, superintendents or school boards decided that the challenged materials should be retained. There were no decisions to replace the challenged material with revised editions of the same title, or to remove challenged materials from any of the libraries.

Three challenges to material in 1997-98 concerned stories or illustrations that were considered excessively violent or too scary for children. Concerns about material with sexual themes or overly graphic language were expressed in six requests for reconsideration. One challenge was based on concern about witchcraft. The six challenges reported in the other category encompassed concerns which ranged from inappropriateness for children to inaccurate material to perceived cult recruiting material.

The challenges listed below are organized according to library type, public or school, and arranged alphabetically by the title of the challenged material. Under the summary of events, the phrase "Staff review process" refers to adopted procedures by which library staff read or view the materials, collect reviews and other information about the material, and make the decision about the challenged item. This procedure is more common in public libraries. Generally, the library director writes a letter informing the library patron of the decision and explaining the appeals process, in case the citizen is not satisfied with the decision. The phrase "Committee review process" refers to adopted procedures by which a committee, such as an Instructional Materials Review Committee, makes the decision about the challenged item. This procedure is more common in schools. The school board, superintendent, or site council often makes the final decision based on a recommendation from the committee.

Challenges in Public Libraries

Breaking the Ring by Donna Walsh Inglehart (Young Adult Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about bad language.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 11/24/97. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Daddy, Daddy, Be There by Candy Dawson Boyd (Children's Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about promotion of alcoholism and violence.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 12/22/97. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Do What He Says! He's Crazy!!! by John Callahan (Adult Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about sexual innüendo, depiction of violence and elderly/handicap abuse.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 4/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Dragonquest by Anne McCaffrey (Adult Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about inappropriate sexual nature of book jacket.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book jacket retained, 5/21/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Earth Weather As Explained by Professor Xargle by Jeanne Willis (Children's Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about use of aliens to present weather information, inappropriate for children under 8 years old.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained in children's collection, 3/24/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Electronic Gaming Monthly (Young Adult Magazine)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that magazine is filled with images portraying sadistic and perverse themes...unsuitable for youth.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Board review process. Book retained in young adult collection, 10/2/97. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

A Jew in Communist Prague by Vittorio Giardino (Adult Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about inappropriateness for children.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 10/22/97. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Left Bank #6 Kid's Stuff (Adult Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about pictures of a sexual nature and that title would attract children.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 3/27/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Tenderness by Robert Cormier (Young Adult Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about suitability of material for young people.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained in young adult collection, 2/26/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Vision Quest by Terry Davis (Young Adult Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about appropriateness of language for young adults. Request removal or move to adult collection.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained in young adult collection, 8/29/1997. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Wayside School is Falling Down by Louis Sachar (Children's Audiotape)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about content undermining value systems and teaching disrespect of people and property.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained in children's collection, 5/29/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

What is Scientology by Staff of the Church of Scientology (Adult Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about the book's function as recruiting piece for cult.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 1/21/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Woodwinds by Dee Lillegard (Children's Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about inaccurate information about several musical instruments.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 5/29/98. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Challenges In School Library Media Centers

Black Magic, White Magic by Gary Jennings (Children's Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about history of witchcraft, body parts in potions, discussion of witches as a religion.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 2/98. Letter sent.

No further appeal filed.

Draw Me A Star by Eric Carle (Children's Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about drawing of naked man and woman too graphic for elementary students.

Summary of events: Committee review process. School Board approved committee recommendation to retain without restriction, 6/23/98. No further appeal filed.

Stephen Biesty's Cross Sections: Castle by Stephen Biesty (Children's Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about violence and torture in depictions of 14th century.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Book retained, 11/97. No further appeal filed.

The Big Picture: An Eleven Year Overview

The following is a statistical snapshot of the challenges reported since the inception of the Clearinghouse in May, 1987. The total number of challenges was 400, of which 272 were in public libraries and 128 in school libraries. 253 of these challenges were to materials designated for children or young adults and 147 were for adult materials. Objections to the content of library materials fell into the following categories: scary or violent content, 64 challenges; graphic sexual content or explicit language, 155 challenges; witches or occult themes, 51 challenges; homosexual content, 60 challenges; and other concerns, 70 challenges. Library materials were retained in 347 of the challenges (87%) reclassified 10 times (2.5%); restricted 18 times (4.5%); replaced 3 times (1%); and removed 22 times (5%). Assistance with data organization and reviews about materials provided by Val Vogt and Stana Smith at the Oregon State Library.

In order to ensure sound data, we invite every library in Oregon to report all challenges to intellectual freedom. We have posted information about the Clearinghouse, the information request form, the reconsideration report form and other intellectual freedom resources on the Oregon State Library Website at <http:/www.osl.state.or.us/libdev/libdev.html>. You may also contact Clearinghouse Coordinator, MaryKay Dahlgreen, at 503-378-2112 ext. 239 or <marykay.dahlgreen@state.or.us>

The Charts: A Five Year Overview

The following is an overview of the last five years of challenges to library materials in Oregon, based on the data reported since July 1, 1993.

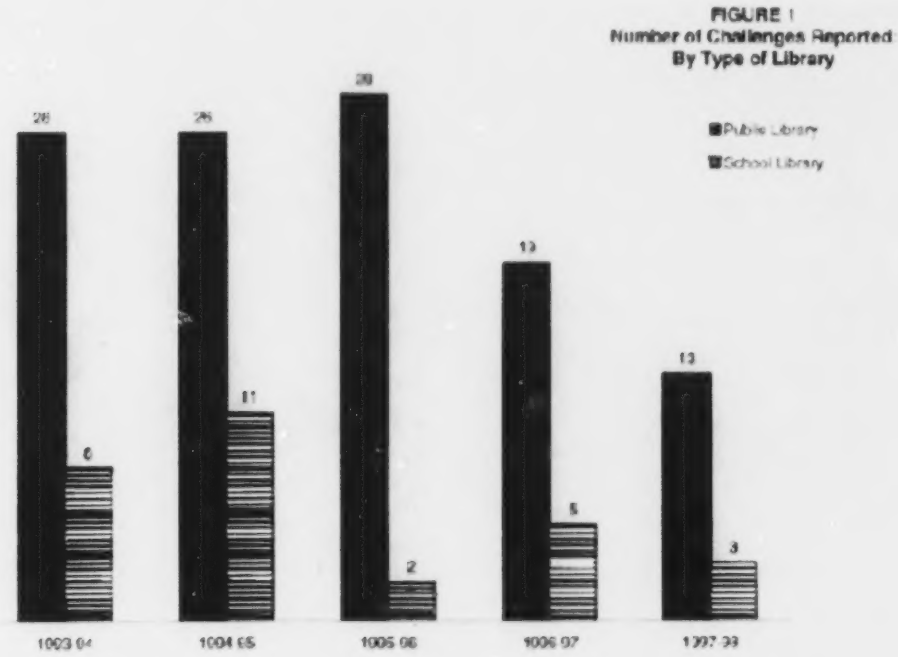

Figure 1 illustrates the number of challenges in public libraries and the number of challenges in school libraries. Over five years, the Clearinghouse collected information about 112 challenges to public library materials, and 29 challenges to school library materials. The past five years have seen a decrease in reported challenges to library materials.

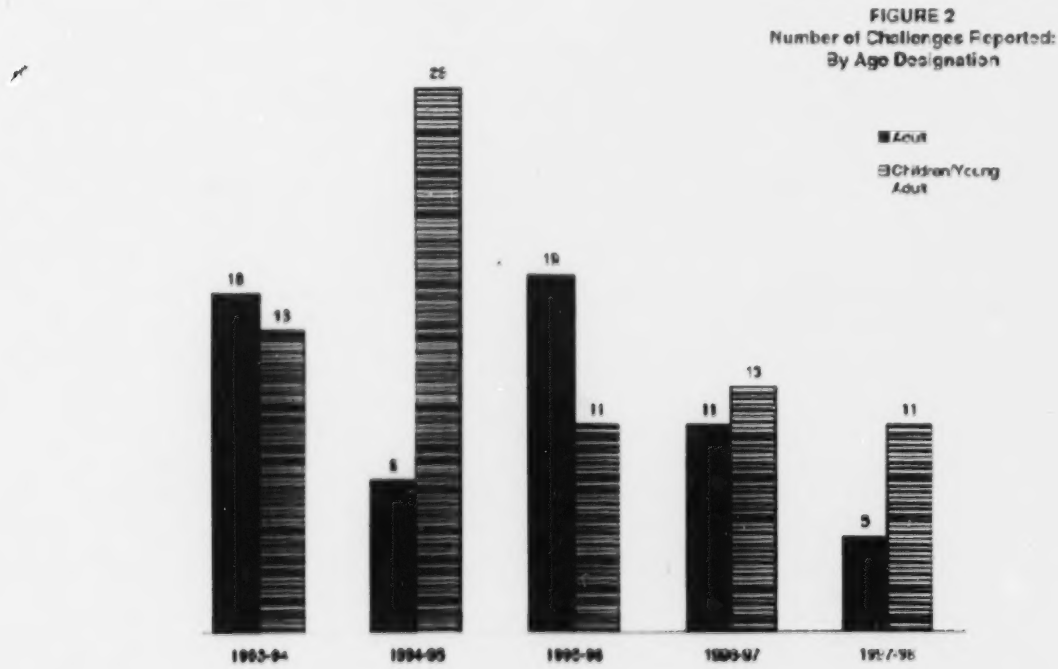

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Figure 2 illustrates whether materials challenged each year were for children and young adults or for adults. Traditionally, citizens have challenged materials designated for children and young adults more than materials for adults. Although 1995-96 showed a marked increase in challenges to materials designated for adults, the traditional pattern of more youth materials challenges was re-established in 1996-97. Since 1993 there have been 80 challenges concerning materials for children and young adults and 61 concerning materials for adults.

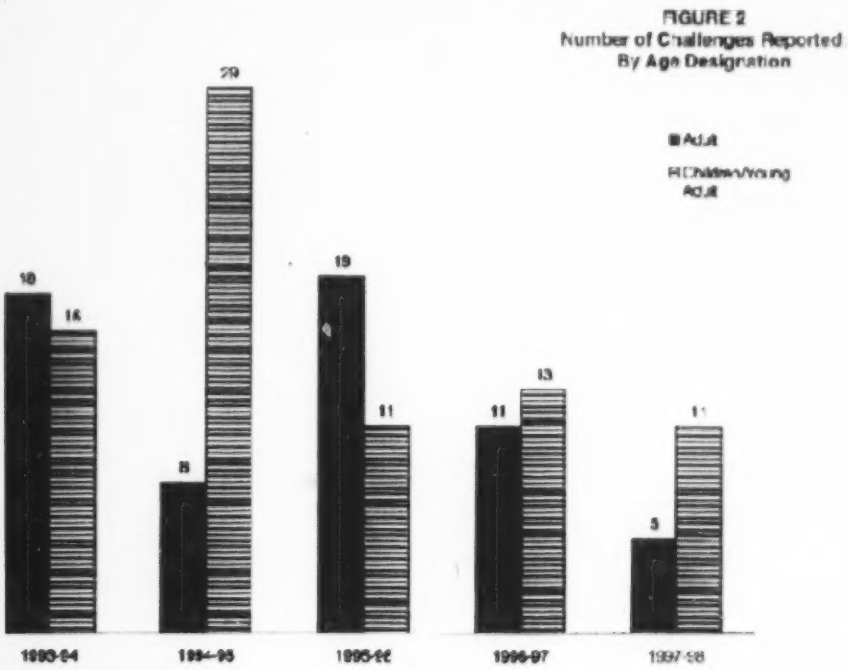

Figure 3 classifies the objections to materials submitted each year into broad categories. Often multiple objections are cited against materials but the chart illustrates only one major objection for each challenge. The chart indicates that while the category of challenges related to graphic sexual content or explicit language has typically been the category with the greatest number since the early years of the Clearinghouse, all the other categories of challenges have varied in number in recent years.

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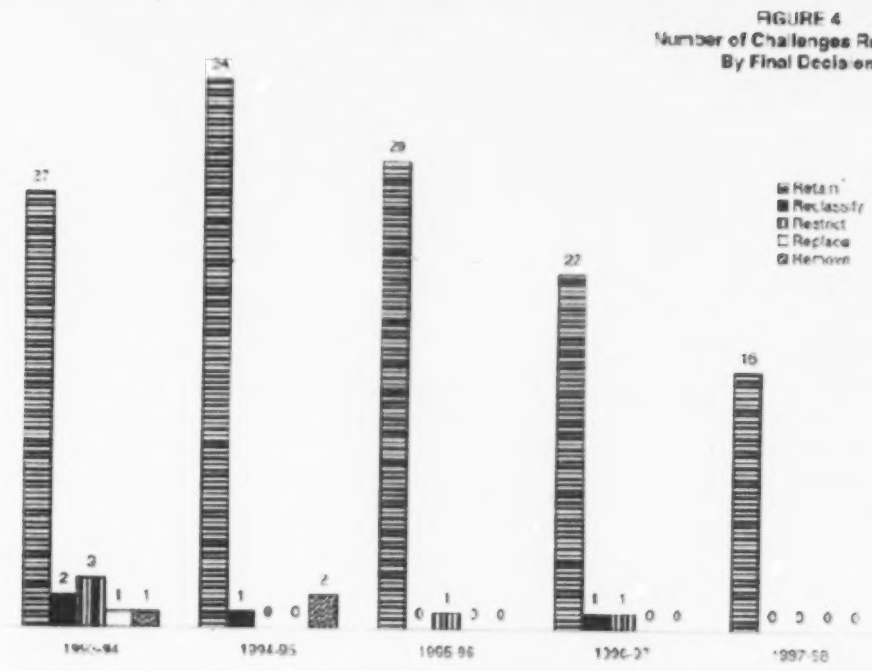

Figure 4 illustrates the final outcome of each challenge: whether the materials were retained without restriction in each library, reclassified to a different age group or subject section in the library, restricted to a certain age group or restricted to access only with parental permission, replaced with a similar item on the same subject or a new edition of the same title, or removed from the library. Over the years most materials have been retained on library shelves with no restriction.

Other Issues in Intellectual Freedom in Oregon in 1997-98

In addition to the formal challenges to library materials in both school and public libraries there have been several challenges to curriculum materials reported to the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse. In each case a committee determined that the material in question should be retained as curriculum. The curriculum materials questioned were the books Signs of Life in the USA by Sonia Maasik and Jack Salomon and Beowulf: A New Retelling by Robert Nye, as well as the videotape, Sex Lies and the Truth.

A public library received a statement of concern about the amount of Christian materials on the new book shelf of their library. The citizen was concerned that an inordinate amount of the new book funds were being spent on that subject, to the exclusion of other materials. The library staff asked that more specific information be submitted.

The library community in Oregon, as in other parts of the United States, continues to focus on intellectual freedom issues surrounding the Internet. The introduction of legislation, at the Federal level as well as the state level, surrounding filtering or blocking software has prompted the American Library Association to produce several items that can be of assistance to librarians developing Internet use policies. Children and the Internet: Guidelines for Developing Public Library Policy was recently published by several divisions of ALA (ALTA, ALSC and PLA). The Office for Intellectual Freedom has written Guidelines and Considerations for Developing a Public Library Internet Use Policy, available at <http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/internet.html> and the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee has developed a document containing frequently asked questions about Internet use policies, available at

<http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/interfaq.html>.

There is still much agreement that librarians play a critical role in guiding parents and children to sites that they can recommend. ALA's 50+ Great Sites has been expanded to 700+ Great Sites: Amazing, Spectacular, Mysterious, Colorful...<http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/> and has been joined by Teen Hoopla: An Internet Guide for Teens at <http://www.ala.org/teenhoopla/main.html>.

Because the Internet is a new and rapidly changing medium, the Clearinghouse would like to track Internet challenges in libraries. Please communicate with us about concerns and challenges that you receive so we can maintain contact with libraries in Oregon and are able to fulfill our role as the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse. Contact MaryKay Dahlgreen, Clearinghouse Coordinator, <marykay.dahlgreen@state.or.us> or 503-378-2112 ext. 239.

Our thanks to Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association for underwriting a major portion of the cost of printing the 11th Annual Report and to Media Weavers for printing and including the Annual Report in the Fall issue of Writers NW.

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